



Cal Poly Organic Farm Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

Welcome to Week 21! As always, life on the farm is grand!

News from the farm

Welcome:

Cindy Douglas, our new farm manager.

Cindy last worked at Tutti Frutti Farms in Lompoc, CA which specialize in selling at Farmer's Markets and consists of over 200 acres.

Check out their website at: <http://www.tuttifruttifarms.com/>

Terry Hooker, our farm manager for many years is off to blue-er waters – he will soon be leaving for an extended sailing adventure. I expect there will be many tales to tell when he returns to land.

We'll have more information about Cindy and Terry's plans in future newsletters.

Vegetable of the Week

Braising Greens

more than just "good for you"

Dark, leafy greens often don't get the respect they deserve. We're forced to eat them as kids because they're "good for us" and they never quite lose that stigma. Not only that, they reach their peak in the dead of winter, right when we're dreaming of warm-from-the-sun tomatoes and sweet, juicy stonefruit.

Dark, leafy greens are a great source of calcium, iron, folic acid, vitamins A and C, and fiber. Also a diet high in antioxidant-rich cruciferous vegetables such as cabbage, kale, and broccoli helps protect against certain types of cancer.

Not only are braising greens nutritional powerhouses, they also offer "a great bouquet of flavors that people aren't normally used to savoring."

Braising greens are a category of dark, leafy vegetables that have strong, assertive flavors and often tough, fibrous leaves. Though they can be eaten raw, most braising greens, such as collards, kale and chard, are cooked to help break down their fibrous texture and mellow their bitter flavor, resulting in tender, succulent greens with a flavorful bite.

Fall/Winter Season 2006 - 2007

Week 21 Produce

4 February - 10 February

- *Avocados - Old Creek Ranch (full only)
- *Kiwis - Haussler Farms
- *Pistachios - NPO
- *Celery or Garlic-Living Soils or Four Elements Farm (respectively)
- Butternut Squash - CPOF
- Salad Mix - CPOF
- Purple Turnips - CPOF
- Purple Onions - CPOF
- Parsley - CPOF
- Braising Mix - CPOF
- Cauliflower or Cabbage or Kale – CPOF (full only)
- Arugula – CPOF (full only)

* Certified Organic

Braising greens generally fall into two main categories: brassicas, which are the cruciferous varieties such as mustard, broccoli rabe, kale, ruffled cavolo nero (also called dino or dinosaur kale), and chenopods, which include spinach, chard, beet greens and amaranth. Other varieties that can be found in mixes include baby Asian greens such as mizuma, tatsoi and pak choy.

Each of these has distinct characteristics that must be taken into account when preparing them. Southerners will often add a bit of brown sugar to counter the bitterness of collards. This is also useful trick for introducing finicky children to these greens. Bok choy is full of water, so this should be considered when adding the braising liquid. Delicate greens like spinach should merely be very lightly wilted, while mustard greens should braise for quite some time or they will be leathery.

The older greens get, the tougher and more strongly flavored they will be. If you're unaccustomed to bitter flavors or want vegetables that cook quickly, it's better to stick to braising mixes.

Braising refers to a cooking method in which tough cuts of meat or vegetables are nearly submerged in liquid and slowly simmered until tender, such as in the classic Southern dish of collards with ham hocks. Most greens, however, need only a brief sauté with a little extra virgin olive oil and garlic to render them tender and delicious. Try a colorful combination of escarole, endive and ornamental kale, steamed and tossed with a little squeeze of fresh lemon juice, olive oil and minced, sautéed ginger.

If the greens have thick stems, which can be tough and woody, you should remove them by folding the leaves in half and ripping the stems out.

Because they're mostly water, greens will shrink considerably when cooked. Two large bunches of greens will usually be enough for a side dish for four people. Rinse the greens but don't dry them, as the residual water will help them wilt as they cook.

All greens share an affinity for certain complimentary flavors: onion and bacon, as well as cheese, butter or cream, acids like lemon juice or wine, and hot spices like red or black pepper all do well with the hearty greens. Ginger and sesame are delicious with spinach. Don't be shy; the big bold flavors will shine against the savory richness, so add plenty.

Try tossing a couple handfuls of braising mix such as baby chard, kale, spinach, mustard, arugula, or other greens into a stir fry. Or cook some diced bacon until crispy, saute some onion or leek in a tablespoon of the bacon grease, then add the greens, cook until they're wilted, then toss with pasta and freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

Tender little baby chard, dandelion or mustard leaves make for a more unusual, pungent salad base than standard lettuces or mesclun mixes. Be sure to balance their slight bitterness with contrasting or sweet flavors such as persimmon, apple, pear, baby beets, citrus, a vinaigrette spiked with honey or a syrupy balsamic vinegar.

You can toss some chopped greens into soup or a frittata, or serve them sautéed with pancetta, pine nuts, and golden raisins and heaped atop crusty toasted or grilled bread rubbed with garlic.

These greens are also great in soups, such as Portuguese Kale Soup with spicy Linguica sausage, pureed into Spinach Cream, or even the less common summertime favorite, Chilled Sorrel soup.

So put on a sweater, light a cozy fire, and enjoy a comforting winter's meal with some braised hearty greens.

RECIPES

BRAISED KASHMIRI GREENS

The recipe and introductory text below are adapted from Floyd Cardoz's book, [One Spice, Two Spice](#). This dish is part of a special menu the chef created for Epicurious's [Wine.Dine.Donate](#) program.

In Kashmir, this dish is made with kohlrabi greens in season, but it is equally delicious when made with any hearty braising greens such as collards, chard (the colored varieties are very pretty), mustard greens, and/or turnip greens. Bok choy and pea shoots are good additions to the mix.

— ingredients —

5 pounds braising greens (see note above)
1 1/2 tablespoons canola oil or olive oil
1/4 teaspoon plus 1/8 teaspoon asafetida*
3 teaspoons cumin seeds
3 large shallots, sliced
3/4 cup julienne strips peeled ginger
1 1/2 small dried red chiles, broken in half (see note)
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

**Asafetida, a spice made from the resin of the giant fennel (Ferula), has a strong, disagreeable smell from sulfur compounds, so a little goes a long way. Its flavor after cooking is like the mildest, mellowest garlic you've ever tasted. Asafetida is sold in lump and ground form and is available at Indian and Middle Eastern markets or [kalustyans.com](#). If unavailable, garlic powder makes a good substitute.*

— preparation —

Discard the tough stems from the greens. Chop the tender stems and set aside, then roughly chop the leaves.

Heat the oil in a large, wide pot over moderately high heat until it shimmers, and add the asafetida and cumin seeds. Cook, stirring, until the spices are fragrant, about 1 1/2 minutes. Add the shallots, ginger, and chile, and cook, stirring, until the shallots are translucent, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add the stems of the greens and salt to taste, then cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the greens and cook, tossing occasionally with tongs, until just tender, about 20 minutes. Discard the chile and season with salt and pepper to taste.

Cook's note: If you want a spicier dish, break the chile into smaller pieces.

Makes 8 servings.

Roasted Cauliflower

Who knew that cauliflower could be such a perfect vehicle for olive oil, lemon, garlic, and Parmesan cheese? I'm used to eating cauliflower raw, steamed, or [puréed](#). I love cauliflower and will eat it any way it is prepared. But this method makes cauliflower palatable to any but the most ardent anti-veggie. Perhaps it's that anything is good roasted with those ingredients, or perhaps the cauliflower really is the ideal stage for this blend of flavors.

1 head of cauliflower
2-3 cloves of garlic, peeled and coarsely minced
1 lemon
Olive oil
Salt and Pepper
Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°F. Cut cauliflower into florets and put in a single layer in an oven-proof baking dish. Add garlic. Squeeze a lemon over cauliflower and drizzle each piece with olive oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place casserole in the hot oven, uncovered, for 15-25 minutes, until the top is lightly brown. Test with a fork for desired doneness. Remove from oven and sprinkle generously with Parmesan cheese.

Serves 4.

Here's an idea that you can use with the salad mix and avocado's

Avocado with Sesame Soy Dressing

2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 teaspoon Asian sesame oil
1/2 teaspoon sugar
Pinch of salt
2 chilled firm-ripe California avocados
12 butter lettuce leaves, rinsed and dried
2 teaspoon sesame seeds, toasted lightly

In a medium bowl whisk together soy sauce, lemon juice, oil, sugar, and a pinch of salt until sugar is dissolved.

Halve, pit, and peel avocado and cut crosswise into 1/2-inch slices. Add avocado to dressing and gently turn to coat.

Line 4 salad plates with lettuce and divide avocado and dressing between them. Sprinkle sesame seeds over avocado.

Serves 4.